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Antisemitism and anti-Zionism: Same Idea, New Cloak



By Brig. Gen. (Res.) Yossi Kuperwasser | May 23, 2016 | Flashpoint 27

Comparing antisemitism and Anti-Zionism and showing that the latter is the modern form of the former may be easy if we simply use the US state department 2010 definition of antisemitism that states that "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." (This is based on the Working Definition of Antisemitism by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia).

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The State department then provides a list of contemporary Examples of antisemitism, many of which are performed by Anti-Zionists:

- 1) Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews (often in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion).
- 2) Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- 3) Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, the state of Israel, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- 4) Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- 5) Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interest of their own nations.

And finally the State department clarifies what antisemitism is relative to Israel and provides examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself as Anti-Zionism in this

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regard:

- 1) Demonizing Israel:
 - i) Using the symbols and images associated with classic Anti-Semitism to characterize Israel or Israelis.
 - ii) Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
 - iii) Blaming Israel for all inter-religious or political tensions.
- 2) Employing double standards for Israel:
 - i) Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
 - ii) Multilateral organizations focusing on Israel only for peace or human rights investigations.
- 3) Delegitimizing Israel:
 - i) Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and denying Israel the right to exist.

However, the State department clarifies correctly that criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitism.

This correlation is substantiated in the findings of the AMCHA initiative report of 2016 about US colleges. That report shows:

- 1) Strong correlation between Anti-Zionist student groups such as "Students for Justice in Palestine" (SJP) and antisemitism,
- 2) Strong correlation between the presence of faculty who have expressed public support for an academic boycott of Israel and antisemitism,
- 3) BDS activity strongly correlates with antisemitic activity,
- 4) Presence of SJP, faculty boycotters and BDS are strong predictors of antisemitism,
- 5) Anti-Zionism permeates and is inseparable from contemporary campus antisemitism.

Yet, a deeper analysis of the similarities and the differences between antisemitism and Anti-Zionism requires thorough understanding of the broad perspective and context of the effort to delegitimize the existence of the nation state of the Jewish people in its ancestral homeland, which is the purpose and the realization of Zionism. The complex DNA and the ideological and political substructure of this delegitimization campaign, one of whose expressions is the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement, is constituted on the one hand in the Palestinian leadership's 100 year old terror and ideological warfare against Zionism and its realization in the state of Israel and on the other hand in the extreme radical thinking and the ongoing antisemitic feelings in certain radical groups in the West.

As a matter of fact, delegitimization of Israel represents two ideas which are not mutually exclusive. First, it is a manifestation of a modern form of antisemitism. In the past hatred of the Jews and their discrimination and persecution were justified by false religious and later on racial argumentations, which are totally inconceivable today. Nowadays this attitude is justified by national argumentation claiming that the Jews should be treated differently from all other nations and that their state represents evil because of both the injustice embedded in its creation and prolonged existence and the horrible nature of the Jews who live there, and therefore its existence is unjustified and illegitimate.

Secondly, it is one of the arrows in the quiver of the Palestinian ongoing effort to bring about the end of Zionism. Palestinian and Arab boycotts of Zionism and attempts to delegitimize any international contact with Israel were used throughout the century of the conflict over the right of the Jews to have a state on any piece of the land of Israel\Palestine. But whereas in the past they were overshadowed by the bigger arrows such as Arab military interventions, Palestinian terrorism or even Palestinian political and diplomatic activity, in recent years its relative importance and visibility grew to the extent that the discussion it creates has gained traction in circles closer to the mainstream.

In this context the Palestinian effort to delegitimize Zionism and Israel is based on and derived from the ideological pillars of the Palestinian identity as inculcated in the minds of the Palestinian people by their leadership, some of which are in themselves derived from antisemitism in its classic form. Four of these identity pillars are judgmental and three are imperative. The judgmental



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ones state that a Palestinian has to believe that Zionism and its realization in the nation state of the Jews constitute injustice because:

1) Jews are not a people or a nation but merely believers of a religion and therefore do not have a right of national self-determination in a nation state of their own (unlike the Arab-Palestinians who are a people and deserve their state).

2) The Jews don't have a national or sovereign history in the land of Israel\Palestine, and therefore their effort to justify their demand for a nation state in this piece of land based on the claim to reconstitute the Jewish national home there (as stated in the mandate given to Britain by the League of Nations in 1922) is false and baseless and so is the entire international legitimacy for the establishment of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. Palestine in its entirety is the land of only one people – the Palestinians. The Palestinians insist in this context on denying the existence not only of the Jewish kingdoms but also of the Jewish Temple on Temple Mount and insist on calling it "The alleged Temple".

3) Jews in general, Zionists in particular and settlers more than others, are terrible creatures. They are by their nature (and this is where classic stereotype description of the Jews in European antisemitism comes into play) greedy, cruel, isolationists, cunning, striving for world domination, responsible for all hardships, condescending, perceiving themselves as superiors and war-mongering. Moreover, as stated by certain Islamic traditions they should be seen as descendants of pigs and apes and as reluctant people who refuse to understand and accept the divine message of Islam. These characteristics made the Europeans eager to get rid of the Jews and they justify the Palestinian intransigence to accept the Jews that were forced upon them by the colonial West.

4) The struggle against Zionism is both national and religious. It's national in the sense that the Palestinians as a people have the right for all of Palestine, their homeland, and it's religious in the sense that Palestine was part of the early conquests of Islam and became a house of Islam (Dar el-Islam) and as such, according to some religious interpretations, cannot be ruled by anyone who isn't Muslim. This is why those who die in the struggle are witnessing martyrs in the religious sense (Shahid). Since Israel should be considered as a bridgehead for Western culture and influence in the Moslem Middle East, the battle against its existence is also justified as a part of the war to protect Islam against Western domination.

The three imperative elements are:

1) A Palestinian should constantly struggle against Zionism and all forms of struggle are legitimate (the Palestinians use the term 'mukawama' or resistance for this struggle). The preference of various ways of struggle should be based on cost-benefit consideration regarding their contribution to promoting the fight against Zionism. Delegitimization, including BDS, is one of the recommended forms of struggle at this stage by all factions of the Palestinians. The PA recommends as well unilateral diplomatic activity and "popular resistance" (a term that refers to violent activities that do not involve the use of firearms or explosives, such as stabbings, drive over, Molotov cocktails and stones), whereas Hamas recommends all forms of terrorism. (After 6 months of promoting the stabbing wave of terror in the context of a "Popular resistance", the PA embarked on the end of March 2016 an effort to make it subside, due to its cost-benefit calculation.

2) Palestinians must regard themselves as victims, and the only ones as such, of the conflict. Their victimhood is a product of the colonialist West (who legitimized the establishment of the state of Israel) and of Zionism (which is also responsible for the creation of the refugee problem and the occupation since 48' and 67' alike). Because they are victims they can never be asked to be accountable or responsible for what they do. The victimhood of the Jews in Europe, which was deliberately overstated, promoted and exploited by the Zionists, does not justify the injustice that lies behind the Palestinian victimhood.

3) Palestinians should always be committed to all of Palestine, even if it is not realistic to believe that they would be able to rule or govern all of Palestine anytime soon. This commitment is unwavering and any erosion in it is treason and justification of the Zionist narrative.

The purpose of the delegitimization efforts is first and foremost to build the framework of thinking about the conflict in the west in a way that goes along with these pillars, believing that this way international support for Israel will diminish and its ability to use its capabilities, including the military ones, to strengthen its ability to survive will dissipate.

The way to do it is through concerted, coordinated and wide-ranging effort in various fields through which the western mindset regarding the conflict is constructed. These include the media (both traditional and new social media), political and diplomatic activity, the education system



(primarily the academia, faculty and campus' students alike), cultural activities, the legal arena, religious institutions, trade unions and economic activity (BDS).

The Palestinians operate in these arenas in two parallel complementary efforts. On the one hand, Hamas, whose charter is full with extreme antisemitic messages – through its international supporters from the international Muslim Brotherhood – cooperates with ultra-radical leftists in what is called “the green-red alliance” and together they promote a radical discourse of delegitimization that is based on Anti-colonialist, Anti-Western and Anti-nationalist logic. On the other hand, secular and national Palestinian movements supported by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority, promote, together with radical liberals in the west – including many NGOs – a delegitimization discourse based on the logic of human rights.

The delegitimization relative importance and visibility grew considerably in the last 15 years and so did its success in shaping the framework with which the Western liberals think about the conflict. This tendency began in 2001, following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, and gained momentum since 2005, after this terror campaign had been proved futile. It took advantage of the collapse of communism which made the commitment to destroy Israel as a way of redemption over the Western crimes towards Moslems a cause célèbre for former ultra-leftist organizations in the West. The growing success of delegitimization was possible also due to the fact that Israel was very late to respond, at least until the Goldstone report of 2009 and the Mavi-Marmara flotilla in 2010, and because unlike religious and racial antisemitism, in the national antisemitism Jews can participate and they constitute an important part of Anti-Zionism and contribute to its credibility.

Nevertheless ever since Israel and the Jewish people and their friends in the West became aware of the potential national security threat embedded in this phenomenon and started to organize to fight against it and later on to actually take steps to curb down the delegitimization efforts, the direction has become more balanced with Israel and its supporters able to achieve some successes as well. Two of those many successes are worth mentioning here. One is the definition of antisemitism adopted by the State department back in 2010, as mentioned in detail above. This definition makes it clear that Anti-Zionism is antisemitism, and therefor demonization of Israel, adopting double-standards about Israel and delegitimization of Israel are expressions of antisemitism which is hatred towards Jews. The second is the growing understanding in the West of the true nature of the BDS as a movement whose goal is to eliminate the Jewish state of Israel and not to help promote peace between the Jews and Palestinians^[1]. This understanding already led many harsh critics of Israel to distance themselves from the movement and also brought about legislation in many countries against BDS and more legislation of this kind will probably follow.

To conclude, antisemitism and Anti-Zionism are basically “the same idea with a different cloak”. Their common motivation is hatred to Jews and their common goal is to deprive them from the rights entitled to other peoples or human beings. The arguments and methods used by both of them (BDS, intimidation and violence) are very similar too. Yet the discourse used by Anti-Zionism is different and is based on Anti-nationalism, Anti-colonialism and human rights arguments: the tools it uses are more updated and sophisticated (international institutions, NGO's, BDS, social media etc.) and it relies on new supporters. Whereas in the past antisemitism was coming mainly from the extreme right, Anti-Zionism is promoted mainly by the ultra-radical left and by radical liberal groups, and enjoys the support of ultra-radical and radical liberal Jews as well, who were opposed to antisemitism. There is a difference also in the nature of the opposition to these attitudes. The opposition to Anti-Zionism is led by the Jewish people and supported by many Western leaders and grass roots, who are much more able and self-confident in fighting it, thanks to a large extent to the existence of Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people, and to the lessons learned from the limited resistance in the past to antisemitism and the disasters it brought upon the Jews and upon the entire humankind.

^[1] The 2005 BDS call displays ambiguity of language in its three conditions Israel would have to fulfill for the boycott to be lifted:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall.
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

But, this shallow ambiguity was easily clarified by both the movement leaders and by critics of Israel. Here are some examples:

- 1. "OK, fine. So BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state... BDS is not another step on the way to the final showdown; BDS is The Final Showdown." Ahmed Moor, Palestinian Student and BDS activist.
- 2. "The real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel." As'ad Abu Khalil, Professor of political science and BDS leader University of California
- 3. "Mellifluous talk of democracy and rights and justice masks the BDS objective that is nothing other than the end of the Jewish state." Roger Cohen, Columnist, NYT

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